

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**

**February 23, 2017**

**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)**

**Governor's H.B. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE  
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS  
THEREFORE  
Anthony Pierlioni,**

Good afternoon Senator Osten and Senator Formica, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Anthony Pierlioni and I am a registered voter

I want to take a moment to talk about my time as an extremely awkward 12-year-old-boy. I was attending my first middle school dance and couldn't be more excited to give flowers to a young girl. She was perfect, at least as far as I knew back then. When my father picked me up from the dance, I couldn't stop talking about it all. Needless to say, that night, I couldn't sleep. I was so excited that I had the guts to give the flowers to her, the bravest thing a young man could do in the eyes of kids that age.

I got up from bed for a glass of water and found my father, my best friend, getting high in the kitchen with my uncle. These were my two favorite people in the world and two biggest role models, sharing drugs in the one room efficiency apartment that my father and I shared. I remember being able to immediately tell that they were "messed up" and how incredibly sad that made me feel. Within the same school year, my mother was in prison in Niantic for an assault. Each of them were tremendous people with goals and so much to offer the world. They were my only supports, in need of support themselves that they either hadn't received or didn't find or want. Tough for a 12-year-old to know which.

What I can tell you is that my mother got help, and my father didn't. He died at 56, right in line with the life expectancy for people with severe and persistent mental health diagnoses. My mother got help from state funded programming, particularly non-profits and now, with a pardon, she works as a nurse and is a loving grandmother to 5 grand-daughters.

As the Manager of Young Adult Services and Social Rehabilitation at InterCommunity, I have the pleasure of working with folks like my parents every day. Sure they might be down on their luck and/or in need of mental health or substance use services to get over the hump and live as functional and productive members of our community, but that doesn't mean that don't have much to offer. I see them participate in programming that is meaningful and cost effective. I see

them find passions that get them off the couch, help them build experience and confidence, and get them jobs that are rewarding and suited to their preferences and skills.

I can say that it is tough to do this work when proposed budget cuts make it feel like our challenging and important work is not appreciated. It is tough to keep fighting when we see important pillars in our community like Connecticut Legal Rights Project and the Regional Mental Health Boards, who exist to ensure people are taken care of and services are delivered the right way, are at risk of being drastically cut from our most vulnerable citizens.

If we don't want to preserve funding for so many of these people in need, perhaps we can think of the awkward 12-year-old kids who need the best role models and supports possible if they are to stay out of hospitals and prisons themselves. We all know awkward 12-year-olds have decades ahead of them, so why not help shape our communities so children grow up with the best chance to succeed. Invest in people is now, and they will cost you less in the future.

Thank you.